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**Congress of the United States**  
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RANKING MEMBER  
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SPENDING

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
GOVERNMENT REFORM

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE  
WORKFORCE

June 15, 2011

*WCB*  
*USF, low*  
*income*  
*801*

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Lifeline and Link-Up

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I am writing to express my concern over the possibility that the FCC will make any reduction in, or impose any limitations upon, the Lifeline and Link-Up programs. Congress created these programs in 1984 to ensure that all Americans had access to telephone service, regardless of their abilities to afford it. Among other benefits, these programs make it possible for the elderly to make contact with emergency medical service, for the homeless to communicate with agencies that provide them assistance, and for the unemployed to receive calls from potential employers. These programs truly provide a "lifeline" for our most disadvantaged citizens, who have greatly increased in number during the severe recession we are experiencing.

This is a matter of great personal interest to me. When I was growing up, my family moved 21 times and, on occasion, we lived in our car. There were times when we needed telephone service, but did not have it. I know personally how important it is to have access to a telephone, and what the results are when a family does not have it. I don't want any family to be in that situation.

The Lifeline and Link-Up programs were supposed to prevent that situation from occurring. During the first two decades of those programs, the biggest problem was that the two programs were underutilized, and only a third of those who were eligible actually signed up. In the last few years, two factors have increased participation. First, we are experiencing the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression, and millions of additional people are living below the poverty level. Second, the cost of cell phone

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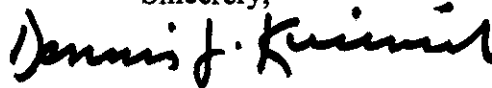
service has fallen, and the benefits provided by Lifeline and Link-Up have made cell phones affordable to many more people.

The increase in participation has, understandably, increased the cost of the programs. This is not a bad result—it is a good result. More people who need the benefits of the programs are taking advantage of them. And the entire cost of the programs is paid by fees charged to the companies that provide wireless service.

We should not be talking about putting a “cap” on the cost of the programs. We should be talking about how we can increase participation so that everyone who qualifies for the benefits enjoys those benefits.

And we should not be talking about limiting the benefits to “one-per-address” during a severe recession in which separate households have been combined because of financial necessity resulting from foreclosures or inability to pay the rent. There is no evidence of fraud or abuse of the programs that has been publicly released. If there is fraud or abuse of the program, it should be dealt with appropriately, but not by an arbitrary “one-per-address” restriction, when the mandate from Congress is “to make telecommunications service available to all Americans.” FCC 97-157, par. 330.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dennis" being the most prominent part.

Dennis J. Kucinich  
Member of Congress

Cc: Michael J. Copps, Commissioner  
Robert M. McDowell, Commissioner  
Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner  
Meredith Attwell Baker, Commissioner



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

July 14, 2011

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI  
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Dennis J. Kucinich  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2445 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kucinich:

Thank you for your letter concerning the Universal Service Lifeline/Link-Up program. I appreciate your thoughts and your letter has been entered into the record of the Commission's pending *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Notice)* proceeding.

The *Notice* we released in March proposes immediate reforms to make the Lifeline/Link-Up program more efficient and effective, to ensure it keeps pace with technology, and to determine how best to meet our national broadband adoption goals. Specifically, the *Notice* proposes modifications to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse, improve accountability, and prevent over-burdening contributors to the Universal Service Fund. These proposals include the establishment of a national accountability database – administered by an independent third party – to ensure that multiple carriers are not receiving support to serve the same household and that only eligible households are participating in the program. The *Notice* also proposes a pilot program, funded with savings from the reforms, to determine how Lifeline/Link-Up can best be used to increase broadband adoption and use among low-income consumers. The Commission took an interim step in a *Report and Order* released on June 21, 2011, to eliminate and prevent waste by ensuring that multiple carriers do not get support for serving the same consumer. I am enclosing the Commission's News Release on this action for your information.

I look forward to working with you to ensure access to telecommunications and broadband for all Americans. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski

Enclosure